

BUNCOM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2003



REMEMBERING THE STORY OF THE "LOST MINE OF STERLING"

The mystique of goldmining and the thrill of suddenly discovered riches always seems to bring about tales and legends. The gold mining era on Sterling Creek was no different. The time was the early 1870s. The town of Sterlingville, where the Sterlingville Cemetery is all that remains, was a thriving community. But miners were starting to feel that the boom years were over. The tale is retold from the 1964 book, "Gold on Sterling Creek," by Francis D. Haines, Jr., and Vern S. Smith:

The only notable event in these years was the origin of the tale of the lost mine of Sterling. The story broke with the death of one of the early settlers, Jacob "Jake" Roudebush, in 1874 and has continued to find believers to the present day.

Jake had been one of the early settlers of Sterlingville. He was married sometime before 1860 to the widow of one Mulligan who had accompanied her husband to the area in the early days of the gold rush.

The two had lived on at Sterling where Jake continued as a miner until he became ill in 1870. A doctor was called in and the illness was diagnosed as consumption and the particular variety known then as "long consumption." The treatment advised was to take long walks for exercise and get lots of rest as the only possible cure for the disease.

Day after day Jake walked the valley and the hills surrounding it. The illness did not, however, respond to this treatment and Jake finally found himself bedridden. Old "Cap" Saltmarsh proved a real friend at this time as he supplied the family with food and helped in the nursing of Jake.

In gratitude for this assistance, according to the story, Jake one day asked "Cap" to drag out a box that was beneath the bed. In it were a number of exceptionally rich quartz specimens. Jake showed these samples to his friend and said that he had found them in the course of his walks in the hills.

Jake went on to say that he had taken pains to hide the discovery. He had picked up all of the float from the ledge and had worked assiduously to hide the outcroppings so that no one would stumble on it accidentally, a real possibility for the hills near Sterling were a favorite resort of local deer hunters. Jake was sure that he had made the richest quartz strike in the history of the area.

As Jake grew worse, he was taken to Jacksonville and placed in a nursing home at county expense.

(See Lost Mine, Page 2)

Buncom to be part of Ruch Library Mural

Society members Lilli Ann and Marvin Rosenberg are organizing a community effort to create a mosaic mural for the entrance to our new Ruch Library. When the mural is completed and installed, you'll be able to spot the Buncom Post Office Centennial, as well as many other items representative of the Buncom area and the rest of the Applegate Valley.

"A Huntin' We Will Go!"

(This was written some years ago. Does that make it a historical document, Connie?)

By CONNIE FOWLER

Well, it's that time of year again and I've never hidden the fact that I'm rooting for the deer. It's just not my thing, I guess. For one thing it seems to take so much energy. All that preparation. All those decisions to make. If the rig is full, should you leave some of the beer and take the food, or forget the food and take more beer? Should you wear camouflage clothes so you can bag one? Or wear neon orange so your buddies don't bag you. And all that camping gear. Why one group of guys I know literally create a small community. And the food would put Jacksonville Inn to shame. I wonder how they manage to fit in time for the hunt, what with cooking, dishes, cleaning. I'll bet not one of them would be caught dead doing any of that sort of woman's work back home.

Newcomers to the area find a few adjustments necessary, especially this time of year. After all, things are a little bit laid-back. A few years ago, a friend who had recently moved here from California, built a house. Used to the highly competitive Bay Area, and aware that people in this area were crying for work, he expected the work to go quickly. It was late summer and he hoped to finish the house by winter.

When the fellow arrived to give him the estimate on the new heat pump, and the price was negotiated, our friend asked, "When can you install it?" "Well," the fellow replied, "Let's see. Next week is out 'cause that's doe season, and after that is buck season which pretty much takes care of October." He drawled. "Then I have a chance to go elk hunting in Eastern Oregon, so it looks like we can get that in for you some time in late November." Now that's laid-back.

I guess I'm a little selfish. I don't like giving up my walks in the woods, even for a month. The other day, I dressed with great care

for my usual walk. By the time I got ready I looked like a gaggle of teenagers hanging out at the mall. Neon pink, orange, green and that was just my shoes. As I headed out the driveway, ghetto-blasters turned up to 80 decibels to let my whereabouts be known, my husband called, "Have a nice walk, 'dear'." "Shh, not so loud", I whispered, "please call me something besides 'dear'; hunting season opened today."

It's just not my thing, and that's O.K. If it's yours I respect that. I like a good hunk of venison, too. But be very careful. I'll still root for Bambi, but a human life is unmeasureably more valuable so watch out for each other and if you have any steaks left over, well....

Trail Band is a Sellout

The Annual Buncom Night at the Trail Band show at Medford's Craterian Theater is sold out. All of our block of tickets for the Dec. 6 performance are gone, and the theater reports the entire theater is sold out.

However, if you would still like to attend, call Lyn Hennion at 899-7656 and she'll put you on the Buncom and theater waiting lists.

LOST MINE (from Page 1)

He lingered on for three months before succumbing to his "long consumption." He died without revealing the secret of the location of his strike to anyone.

A strike had been made. "Cap" Saltmarsh had seen the ore samples. But where was the ledge? Many men have searched for the lost Sterling mine but it has never been found. A few small strikes have been made in the hills surrounding Sterling Creek but none of them have been of really high quality ore. The secret of the location lies buried with its discoverer in the old cemetery in Jacksonville.

It's Membership Renewal Time

BUNCOM HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP DUES

Here are my/our membership dues for 2004. Enclosed is \$5.00 for an individual or family. Here is my/our name as we would like it to appear on the mailing list:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, St, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Comments: _____

Mail to: Buncom Hist. Society, 3232 Little Applegate Road, Jacksonville, OR 97530

THANKS TO THESE NEW OR RENEWING MEMBERS

Mr. and Mrs. Eric R. Merz, Fresno, CA
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Jane & Paul Sage, Jacksonville, OR
Peter & Karen Salant, Jacksonville, OR
Steve & Carrie Vincent, Central Pt, OR

A SPECIAL THANKS ...

Along with their dues, several of our members sent additional donations. We would like to offer our additional thanks for their generous support:

Jim & Lindsay Berryman
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Peter & Karen Salant
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The Buncom Historical Society is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving the buildings and history of the ghost town of Buncom, Oregon. Society address: 3232 Little Applegate Road, Jacksonville, OR 97530.

On the Internet:
www.buncom.org

To join the Society, send \$5.00 with your name and address to the Society at 3232 Little Applegate Road, Jacksonville, OR 97530.

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